

## Reading non-fiction and media: 2. Opinions and facts

This audio bite is about opinions and facts.

ELIOT: The first question often asks you to write about opinions and facts. Now this sounds easy. For instance, 'Elvis Presley is dead' is a fact. But 'Elvis's music is great' is an opinion – some people like his music, others don't.

ALIX: Now it's unlikely your question will be as easy as this. For a start, you've got to find the information in the passage somewhere. Then you've got to work out if it's a fact or not. Have a go at this one:

ELIOT: Every year, hundreds of thousands of calves are separated from their mothers within four days of birth.

ALIX: Fact or opinion? Well, can you prove it? If you can, by looking at evidence or other information, then it's a fact. And what Eliot said is a fact – you can look it up on the internet or in an encyclopaedia. Have a go at another:

ELIOT: Separating calves like this is cruel. It is done only to provide us with cheap milk.

ALIX: Fact or opinion? Well it's an opinion – you can't really look it up and get a clear answer – some people would agree with it, some wouldn't. Have a go at a few more:

ELIOT: Hundreds of people die in car accidents in Britain every year ...

ALIX: Fact

ELIOT: ... and car companies have made cars safer ...

ALIX: Fact

ELIOT: ... but they should much more ...

ALIX: Opinion

ELIOT: ... because lots of young people are careless and won't ever learn how to drive safely ...

ALIX: Opinion. And now have a go at a longer passage. Listen carefully and see if you can find two facts and two opinions.

ELIOT: A recent study shows that over half of 16 year olds in England have either tried a drug or have been offered one. Drugs can be easily found almost anywhere in the country, and things are only going to get worse. However, most teenagers who try drugs will not become dependent upon drugs.

## Reading non-fiction and media: 2. Opinions and facts

ALIX: How did you do? If you aren't sure, play that section again – you should have two facts, and two opinions.

If you're sure – well, the first fact is about half the 16 year olds trying or being offered drugs, and the second is that most don't become drug dependent. And the opinions?

ELIOT: The first is that drugs can be easily found almost anywhere. A lot of people wouldn't agree – you couldn't go around a church or a primary school and 'easily' find some drugs.

ALIX: In fact the passage gives the impression that there are drugs lying around all over the place, and that's not true. The second opinion is that things are only going to get worse – some people would agree, but others wouldn't. And trying to say what will happen in the future is really difficult anyway, so this must also be an opinion.

ELIOT: So there's usually a question asking you to find facts or opinions. Check you are looking at the right passage. If you are given line numbers, make sure you take the information from the right part. If you don't, then you won't be answering the question.

When you find the information, think carefully before deciding whether it's a fact or an opinion. If you can check the statement, such as testing it somewhere, it's usually a fact. But if you can't, and it's the sort of thing people might disagree with, then it's probably an opinion.